



Jerry Hazel

"Pest House"

Most of you probably don't even know what a "pest house" is. A "pest house", back in history, was an old house of some sort, usually on the edge of town, where anyone with a contagious disease was banished. Our pest house was not that severe. It was quite a nice facility adjacent to our local hospital. While in the "pest house", my parents were not allowed to have any contact with me. The way that they visited me was to bring a step ladder, and they would climb up the step ladder and talk to me through the open window.

For some reason or other, I would not eat. They asked my mom what to feed me, and they were dumbfounded when she told them spinach. So they got me spinach and I wouldn't eat it, so they asked mom what was wrong. She tried some of the spinach they had fixed for me and found that there was sand in it, and I hated sand in my food. They had gone to the trouble of getting fresh spinach and cooking it for me in an effort to get me to eat something --and it's failed! They felt extremely bad. Mom told them to get cans of spinach from the stores and feed it to me. The upshot of it was I ate an incredible amount of spinach for a couple of weeks and survived.

One of the very bad parts of being in the "pest house" was that all of my toys that they had allowed me to have had to be destroyed. I raised a severe ruckus, as I had a Gene Autry cowboy doll. My aunt had made a number of clothes for the doll and I didn't want to give them up. My folks made a deal with them. The doll and its clothes had to be hung in the sun for a week because they felt this would kill the virus. I still have the doll and most of the clothes that my aunt had made for it!!!!

While in the "pest house" the paralysis came on viciously! I was completely paralyzed and unable to do virtually anything. It was very, very hard on my Dad particularly as I was a big strong kid and able to compete in sports with kids much older than myself. In later years, Mom told me that when Dad saw that I was paralyzed, it was the only time she had ever seen him cry!!! After approximately a month, I was released to a regular hospital for treatment.

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